

FORT TOWSON

1 mi. Northeast of Fort Towson, HC 63, Box 1580

Fort Towson

Choctaw

Oklahoma

HALS OK-30

OK-30

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

FORT TOWSON

HALS NO. OK-30

Location: HC 63, Box 1580, Fort Towson, Choctaw County, Oklahoma.
Lat: 34.02789 Long: -95.25467

Significance: Fort Towson, the second fort established in what would become the state of Oklahoma, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated Oklahoma Landmark. It served as fortification along the western boundary of the United States. Soldiers stationed at the fort performed peace keeping operations between Plains Indian tribes and later relocated Southeastern Indians and encroaching white settlers. During the Mexican War (1846-48), troops were sent from the fort into Mexico, and during the Civil War Confederate Troops occupied the fort. The last Confederate general to lay down arms, Cherokee Brig. Gen. Stand Waite, made the fort headquarters for operations within Indian Territory.

History: Built a few months after Fort Gibson in 1824, Fort Towson holds the distinction of the second fort built in present-day Oklahoma. It was named in honor of Army Paymaster General Nathan Towson, and was constructed near the intersection of the Kiamichi and Red rivers in the southeastern section of what was then Indian Territory. Originally, the fort was built to help maintain peace in the area and serve as a buffer between Plains Indian tribes. It would serve as a dispersal point during Indian removal, especially among the Choctaws. The site also served as a gateway for settlers into Texas during the 1830s. Among notable figures to travel through Fort Towson on their way to Texas were Davy Crockett, Ben Milam, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin. During the Mexican War, the fort was a staging area for troops sent into Mexico. By 1854, however, the post was abandoned as the western boundary of the United States steadily moved westward. During the Civil War, the Confederate Army used the site as headquarters for their operations in Indian Territory. Cherokee Brig. General Stand Waite was stationed at the fort. He was the last Confederate General to surrender at the end of the Civil War.

Today, only building foundations remain from the original structures. The property was purchased by the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1967. A period Suttler's Store and Visitor Center have been constructed since then and several archaeological sites have been established in or around the property.

Sources: "Fort Towson," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, <http://www.oci.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/70000531.pdf> (accessed December 10, 2009).

Tolman, Keith, "Fort Towson," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/F/FO044.html> (accessed December 10, 2009).

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Fort Towson ruins (National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form: <http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/70000531.pdf>, accessed December 10, 2009).



Sutler's Store (Keith Tolman, "Fort Towson," Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/F/FO044.html>, accessed December 10, 2009).